2331

The DOCTRINE *of the* WHEELS, *in the Viſions of* EZEKIEL, *Opened and Explained:*

IN A

SERMON

Preached to

An ASSEMBLY

OF

MINISTERS and CHURCHES,

AT

The Meeting-houſe of the Rev. Mr. *Anderſon*, in *Grafton-Street*, *Weſtminſter*, *April* the 25th, 1765.

By *JOHN GILL*, D. D.

Publiſhed at Requeſt.

LONDON

Printed; and Sold by G. KEITH, in *Gracechurch-Street*;
J. ROBINSON, in *Horſly-down*; and
W. LEPARD, in *Tooly-ſtreet*.

MDCCLXV.

[Price Six-pence.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

EZEKIEL X. 13.

As for the Wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O Wheel.

SOME time ago, on a public occaſion, I delivered a diſcourſe (ſince printed) concerning the *Cherubim*, or Living Creatures (*a*), frequently mentioned in theſe viſions of *Ezekiel*; and I then intimated, that as by the Cherubim we are to underſtand the Miniſters of the Goſpel; ſo by the Wheels, the Churches of Chriſt under the Goſpel-diſpenſation. And ſince I am about to preach to an Aſſembly of Churches, there can be no impropriety in treating on ſuch a ſubject at this time.

VARIOUS are the interpretations given of theſe Wheels. The more commonly received ſenſe of them is, that they ſignify the World, and all things in it, which are changeable, unſettled, and uncertain; and the Providences of God, which are various and different, and cauſe changes, revolu-

 tions,

(*a*) Called the Doctrine of the Cherubim opened and explained, in a Sermon preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. *John Davis*, at *Waltham Abbey*, *Auguſt* 15, 1764.

tions, and viciſſitudes, in men and things: *one generation paſſeth away, and another cometh*; ſome are wheeling out of the world, and others wheeling into it; things whirl about continually, as the wiſe man ſays (*b*) of the wind, and return again according to their circuits; and yet they are not carried by a blind impetus, but are under the guidance of unerring wiſdom, and under the direction of the omniſcient Being, whoſe eyes *run to and fro through the whole earth* (*c*); hence 'tis thought theſe Wheels are ſaid to be *full of eyes*: and though the providences of God, many of them, are intricate and obſcure, and ſo are as it were a *wheel within a wheel*; the reaſons of them are not eaſily penetrated into, nor the ends God has in view at once to be ſeen; *his judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out* (*d*); yet there is an harmony and conſiſtency between them, they are all of a piece; the Wheels have all *one likeneſs*; and when the myſtery of God in providence ſhall be finiſhed, and his judgments are made manifeſt, they will appear harmonious, beautiful, and delightful. But from this generally received interpretation, many have thought fit to recede; ſome, as by the Cherubim, or Living Creatures, underſtand the Churches of

(*b*) *Eccl.* i. 4, 6. (*c*) *Zech.* iv. 10.
(*d*) *Rom.* xi. 33.

of God, compoſed of living ſaints; ſo by the Wheels they ſuppoſe angels are meant (*e*), and that what wheels are to chariots, that angels are to churches, uſeful and ſubſervient to them; *miniſtring ſpirits ſent forth to miniſter for them who are the heirs of ſalvation* (*f*): others are of opinion, that churches and members of churches are deſigned both by the Cherubim and the Wheels; by the one the ſuperior members of churches, and by the other the inferior ones (*g*); ſuch a diſtinction in churches may be admitted, for *God hath ſet ſome in the church, firſt apoſtles, ſecondarily prophets, thirdly teachers*, &c. and the reſt of the members, the private and common ones may be reckoned the inferior, yet all uſeful and neceſſary; the Cherubim are thought to be meant by the former, the Wheels by the latter; and a chariot without wheels is of little or no uſe, as wheels without a chariot, or other carriage, are inſignificant; and thus, as the apoſtle argues with reſpect to the members of an human body, *the eye cannot ſay to the head, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you; nay much more thoſe members of the body, which ſeem to be more feeble, are neceſſary* (*h*). Others, as they interpret the Cherubim of the miniſters

(*e*) *Cocceius* in loc. (*f*) *Heb.* i. 14. (*g*) Vid. *Polanum* in loc. (*h*) 1 *Cor.* xii. 21, 22, 23, 28.

ſters of the Goſpel, and I think rightly, ſo the Wheels of the work of their miniſtry (*i*), which is ſometimes called a courſe, race, or running; thus *John*'s miniſtry is ſaid to be *his courſe*, and the apoſtle *Paul* joins his courſe and miniſtry together, as meaning the ſame thing; and elſewhere directs, to pray that the word of the Lord might have *free courſe*, and be glorified (*k*): and it is obſerved, that there is but one Wheel, one faith, one doctrine of faith, or ſyſtem of truths to be delivered and received; and though miniſtered by different perſons, and theſe have different gifts, yet as to the ſum and ſubſtance of it, is the ſame; as the apoſtle ſays, *the Son of God, Jeſus Chriſt, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Sylvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay* (*l*); we did not contradict ourſelves, nor one another; there is an unity, harmony, and conſiſtence, in the miniſtration of the Goſpel; the Wheels have *one likeneſs*: and though the doctrines of the Goſpel are myſterious, abſtruſe, and hidden to many, are like a riddle, or an enigma, or as a *wheel within a wheel*; yet they are plain to enlightened minds, to them that find ſpiritual and experimental knowledge: and as wheels when ſet in motion roll on with force and rapidity; ſo the doctrines

(*i*) *Starckius* in loc. (*k*) *Acts* xiii. 25. & xx. 24. 2 *Theſſ.* iii. 1. (*l*) 2 *Cor.* i. 1.

trines of the Goſpel, when the Spirit of God is in thoſe Wheels, or when they are attended with his energy, they come with demonſtration and power, and are the power of God unto ſalvation.

But the key for the interpretation of theſe Wheels, as of the Cherubim, is to be taken from *John*'s viſion in the 4th chapter of the *Revelation*; for as the Cherubim, or living creatures, in *Ezekiel*'s viſions, are the ſame with *John*'s four beaſts, or living creatures; ſo the Wheels here are the ſame with the four and twenty elders there, which are the repreſentatives of Goſpel-churches; deſcribed by their number, in alluſion to the *four and twenty* courſes of the prieſts, in the times of *David*; by their character as *elders*, in diſtinction from the church of the old teſtament, and its members; who were as children, in their non-age, under the elements of this world; whereas Goſpel-churches, and their members, are young men and fathers, grown men in knowledge and underſtanding; by their ſeats and thrones on which they ſat, expreſſive of their power and authority of judging and determining things relative to their own affairs within themſelves; as who ſhall be received among them, retained by them, or excluded from them: *what have I to do*, ſays the apoſtle (*m*), *to judge them*

(*m*) 1 *Cor.* v. 12.

them that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? they are alſo deſcribed by their raiment, *clothed in white Linen*; that fine linen, clean, and white, which is the righteouſneſs of the ſaints, and that is the righteouſneſs of CHRIST; and by having *on their heads crowns of gold*, ſignifying they are made kings and prieſts unto GOD by JESUS CHRIST. And now that theſe and the Wheels ſignify the ſame, may be concluded partly by their ſituation; the ſame ſituation the elders have in *John*'s viſion, the Wheels have in *Ezekiel*'s; in *John*'s viſion there was a throne, and one on it, the Lord JESUS CHRIST; next to this throne were the four living creatures, or miniſters of the word; who receive their commiſſion, power, and authority, gifts, grace, light, and knowledge, from CHRIST on the throne; next to them are the elders, or Goſpel-churches, to whom they communicate what they receive from CHRIST; ſee *Rev.* iv. 2, 4. and v. 6. and vii. 11. So in the viſions of *Ezekiel*, there was a throne, and neareſt to the throne were the Cherubim; and *by* the Cherubim were the Wheels, ſee *Ezek.* i. 15, 26. and x. 1, 2. 6, 9. and partly by their dependence on one another, and their order of operation: in *John*'s viſion the four living creatures move firſt, and give the lead in divine worſhip, *Rev.* iv. 9, 10. and v. 14. So in

Ezekiel's

Ezekiel's viſions, as the Cherubim, or living creatures moved, ſo the Wheels did; *when the living creatures went, the Wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lift up from the earth, the Wheels were lift up, Ezek.* i. 19. and again, *when thoſe went, theſe went; and when thoſe ſtood, theſe ſtood, and when theſe were lifted up from the earth, the Wheels were lifted up over againſt them, v.* 21. ſee alſo ch. x. 16, 17, 19. In this light, in this view of things, I ſhall conſider the Wheels, and ſhew the agreement between them and Goſpel-churches; and my buſineſs will be to obſerve their name, their number, their ſituation, their form, figure, and appearance, and their motion.

Firſt, their name, Wheels, or Wheel; *as for the Wheels, it was ſaid in my hearing*; or *they were called in my hearing*, by the following name *Galgal* (*n*); which ſignifies ſomething that may be rolled, a Wheel, and that is round as that is, a circle, or a globe, or ſphere (*o*): now as the round and circular form is a ſymbol of perfection; this may denote the comparative perfection of Goſpel-churches to that of the old teſta-

(*n*) לָהֶם קֹרָא הַגַּלְגַּל ipſæ vocatæ ſunt *vel* fuerunt orbis, Junius & Tremellius, Piſcator; ſee the margin of our Bible; the words may be rendered, as for Ophannim (Wheels) they were called in my hearing *Hagalgal*, the orb or ſphere.

(*o*) Vid. Maimon. Moreh Nevochim, par. 3. c. 4.

ment-church under the law: *the law made nothing perfect*; the ſacrifices of it were not perfect, not could it by them make the comers thereunto perfect: *but the bringing in of a better hope did* (*p*); Chriſt, who is come an high-prieſt of good things to come, the ground and foundation of all ſolid hope; he by one ſacrifice has perfected his people for ever, obtained perfect peace and reconciliation, made a full atonement, wrought out a complete righteouſneſs, and procured a full pardon, and is become the author of eternal redemption and ſalvation; *God having provided ſome better thing for us*, under the Goſpel-diſpenſation, *that they*, of the former diſpenſation, *without us ſhould not be made perfect* (*q*): they were, as before obſerved, as children not grown up to maturity; but members of goſpel-churches, in compariſon of them, are arrived to *the meaſure of the ſtature of Chriſt*; though in compariſon of the church triumphant, or ſaints in heaven, they are imperfect, know but in part, and propheſy but in part. The word here uſed, as hinted before, ſignifies a globe, or ſphere, and is uſed of the heavenly ſphere, the concave, or expanſe, which ſurrounds our globe, and in which the heavenly bodies move; and it is tranſlated *heaven* in *Pſ.* lxxvii. 18. *the voice of thy thunder was in the*

(*p*) *Heb.* vii. 19. (*q*) *Heb.* xi. 40.

the heaven; in *Galgal*, in the heavenly ſphere: and it is eaſy to obſerve, that the Goſpel-church-ſtate is called *the heavenly Jeruſalem* (*r*), in diſtinction from the former diſpenſation, and *heaven* itſelf; and in which ſenſe it is almoſt always, if not always, uſed throughout the book of the *Revelation*; and this may ſuggeſt unto us, that members of Goſpel-churches are, or ſhould be, ſouls born again, born from above; heaven-born ſouls, partakers of the heavenly calling, and ſuch as are preſſing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST.

Goſpel-churches may be ſignified by Wheels, becauſe of their moveableneſs and changeableneſs. Wheels are rolled about and moved from place to place, and ſo have churches been. The firſt Goſpel-churches were planted in *Judea*, and then the kingdom of God, or Goſpel-church-ſtate, was taken from thence, and carried into the *Gentile* world, where various churches were raiſed, as the ſeven churches of *Aſia*; and what was threatened to one of them, the church of *Epheſus*, has been true of them all; that the candleſtick, or church-ſtate, ſhould be removed out of its place; for where are thoſe churches now? Goſpel-churches were firſt in the eaſtern part of the world, then they came more

(*r*) *Heb.* xii. 22.

weſterly, and now more northerly, where their chief ſeat is. Thus they have been wheeled about, and perhaps may take another circuit more ſoutherly. Goſpel-churches are not always in the ſame ſtate and condition, as well as not in the ſame place. Sometimes in proſperity, and ſometimes in adverſity; ſometimes in a ſtate of perſecution, and ſometimes in a ſtate of peace and liberty. The firſt Goſpel-church was at *Jeruſalem*, and was at firſt proſperous and numerous; but at length a perſecution aroſe, by which its members were made havock of, and its miniſters ſcattered abroad; and ſo it fared with other churches; but after a time the churches had reſt throughout *Judea*, *Galilee*, and *Samaria*, and were edified and multiplied (*s*); and ſo it was with the churches among the *Gentiles*, they had tribulation *ten days*, under the ten *Roman* emperors that perſecuted them; and then there was *ſilence in heaven for half an hour*; peace and quietneſs in the churches for a ſmall ſpace of time; in the reign of *Conſtantine* (*t*). At one time, the church is repreſented in a moſt glorious and ſplendid manner, as *clothed with the ſun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve ſtars*; expreſſive of her dignity,

(*s*) *Acts* viii. 1. and ix. 31. (*t*) *Rev.* ii. 10. and viii. 1.

dignity, and of her purity in doctrine and worſhip; and preſently we hear of her taking two wings, and fleeing into the wilderneſs, where ſhe is nouriſhed for a time and times, and half a time (*u*); and in a changeable ſtate on one account or another, have the churches of CHRIST been ever ſince; our forefathers in the laſt century ſuffered perſecution; we now enjoy peace and liberty; what this will iſſue in, time only can diſcover.

The Cherubim are ſometimes called *the chariot of the Cherubim* (*w*); not that they themſelves, abſtractedly conſidered, form a chariot; though the Lord is ſaid to *ride upon a cherub* (*x*); but they with the Wheels make one; for a chariot without wheels, as before obſerved, is of no uſe; but with wheels is fit for carriage; ſuch is the church of CHRIST; it is ſaid, *king Solomon made himſelf a chariot of the wood of Lebanon* (*y*); by king *Solomon* is not meant literally *Solomon* king of *Iſrael*, but a greater than he, CHRIST his antitype, the prince of peace: and by the *chariot* he made for himſelf, his own uſe, ſervice, and glory, may be meant his church; which, as compoſed of perſons poſſeſſed of the fragrant graces of the Spirit, and having the odours of prayer and praiſe, and being perſevering

(*u*) *Rev.* xii. 1, 6, 14.
(*w*) 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 18.
(*x*) *Pſ.* xviii. 10.
(*y*) *Cant.* iii. 9.

ſevering ſaints in faith and holineſs, may be ſaid to be made of the ſweet-ſmelling and incorruptible wood of *Lebanon*; and in this chariot CHRIST rides up and down in the world, and does his work and buſineſs: and indeed wherever there are Wheels of any ſort, and upon any account, there is work to be done; and there is ſcarce any manufacture, but there is a wheel made uſe of in one part and branch of it, or another: and in and by the churches of CHRIST much work is done; here the Goſpel is preached, the ordinances are adminiſtered, the ſacrifices of prayer and praiſe are offered up, ſouls are converted, and ſaints edified and comforted, and GOD in all things glorified. And when Wheels are in motion, they make a great rattling and noiſe. We often read of the ruſhing of chariots, of the rumbling of their wheels, and of the noiſe of them on the tops of mountains; ſee *Jer.* xlvii. 3. *Joel* ii. 5. and when there is any work doing in the churches of CHRIST, eſpecially any thing remarkable, it makes a great noiſe in the world. So in *Judea*, when the Goſpel was firſt preached there, and ſouls were in great numbers converted, and churches planted, the Sanhedrim, the elders, ſcribes, phariſees, and ſadducees, were alarmed with it; and in the *Gentile* world, where ever there was a *door opened*, a door of opportunity

nity to preach the Goſpel, and a door of utterance in miniſters, and a door of entrance into the hearts of men, *there were many adverſaries* (z); to oppoſe CHRIST's miniſters, to ſtir up men againſt them, and give out the cry, *thoſe that have turned the world upſide down, are come hither alſo* (a): yea, there are great noiſes and ſhoutings in miniſters of the word, and the churches themſelves, when any remarkable and extraordinary work is going forward; ſo at the time of the Reformation, which the 10th chapter of the *Revelation* deſcribes, when the voice of CHRIST was *as when a lion roareth*, he being the lion of the tribe of *Judah*; *the ſeven thunders*, the *Boanergeſſes*, or ſons of thunder, *uttered their voices*; and when the judgments of God will come down upon Antichriſt, and upon the Antichriſtian ſtates, and the marriage of the lamb will be come, and the church, the lamb's wife, made ready for him, and the ſpiritual reign of CHRIST will take place, a great voice of much people will be heard in heaven, the church; and a voice out of the throne, and the voice of a great multitude, as of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, ſaying, Allelujah, ſalvation, glory, honour, and power, to the Lord our God, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, *Rev.* xix. 1—7.

SECONDLY,

(z) 1 *Cor.* xvi. 9. (a) *Acts* xvii. 6.

SECONDLY, the number of the Wheels is next to be conſidered. They are called *Wheels* in the plural number in our text, and yet according to it were named *a Wheel,* one Wheel, as elſewhere in the viſion, and yet four; ſee ch. i. 15, 16. they ſeem to be formed in this manner, like two hoops put in a croſs and tranſverſe manner, which interſect each other, and make four ſemicircles; and theſe four ſemicircles make one globe or ſphere; and ſo there were one and yet four, and four and but one. Indeed from *v.* 9, 14. it ſeems as if there were four in this form, ſince there was a wheel to every cherub, and every wheel had four faces; that is, on the four ſemi-circles: now conſidered as one Wheel, they repreſent the church catholic and inviſible, the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, conſiſting of all the elect that have been, are, or ſhall be, even all thoſe whoſe names are written in heaven; and this is but one, of which CHRIST ſays (*b*), *there are threeſcore queens and fourſcore concubines, and virgins without number*; many viſible congregated churches, and a great number of particular ſaints: *my love, my undefiled is* but *one, ſhe is the only one of her mother, the choice one of her that bare her*; there is but one church, of which CHRIST is the head, the head of the

(*b*) *Cant.* vi. 8, 9.

the body, the church; but one church, that he has loved with an everlaſting love, and has given himſelf an offering and ſacrifice for unto God. But particular congregated churches are many; and they are ſignified by the number *four*, partly with reſpect to the four cherubs, as appears from *ver.* 9. *and when I looked, behold, the four Wheels by the Cherubim, one Wheel by one Cherub, and another Wheel by another Cherub*; ſo in the firſt Goſpel-churches, in every church elders were ordained; and in every city, that is, wherever there was a church, an elder, or paſtor was appointed, and conſtituted over it; and for the moſt part but one in a church; tho' in ſome churches, which might be very large, there were more: hence we read of the elders of the church at *Epheſus*, and of biſhops in *Philippi* (*c*); but in the ſeven churches of *Aſia*, there was but one angel, paſtor, or biſhop over each church, one wheel by one cherub; and partly the number four may be uſed with reſpect to the four parts of the world, where churches have been, or will be placed. CHRIST gave his apoſtles a commiſſion to preach the Goſpel to all nations, in every part of the world; and they did go, and their ſound alſo, into all the earth, and unto the ends of the world; and multitudes

(*c*) *Acts* xx. 17. *Phil.* i. 1.

were converted, and churches raiſed in all parts of it; and ſo it will be again, before the end of the world, and the coming of CHRIST; the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord; great numbers will be converted in the four parts of the world; God will bring the ſpiritual ſeed of CHRIST, and of his church, *from the eaſt, and gather* them *from the weſt*; he *will ſay to the north give up, and to the ſouth keep not back, bring my ſons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth* (*d*); who ſhall be gathered into Goſpel-churches; and at the cloſe of time CHRIST will ſend forth his angels, and gather together his elect from the four winds (*e*), where they have lived in a Goſpel-church-ſtate.

THIRDLY, the ſituation of the Wheels; they were upon the earth, and by the cherubim.—1. They were upon the earth; *behold, one Wheel upon the earth*, ch. i. 15. and where one was, the four were; this is obſerved to diſtinguiſh the churches of CHRIST here, from the church triumphant in heaven. CHRIST's family is partly in heaven, and partly on earth; thoſe whom CHRIST redeemed and gathered together in one head, himſelf, and reconciled unto GOD, are things in heaven, and things on earth;

(*d*) *Iſ.* xliii. 5, 6. (*e*) *Matt.* xxiv. 31.

earth; the choſen, redeemed, and called, are firſt gathered into Goſpel-churches on earth, before they are removed to heaven, from whence they will deſcend again, as a bride adorned for her huſband. This points out the place where ſaints for the preſent are; though they are choſen, and called out of the world, yet they are ſtill in it; and the work done in churches, is done by them whilſt in the world; here the Goſpel is preached, and ordinances adminiſtered, converſion-work wrought, and edification in the way and manner it is; theſe are only done on earth: and this may alſo denote that the moveable and changeable ſtate of the churches of CHRIST before obſerved, is only on earth, and in the preſent earth; for in the new earth, the tabernacle of GOD that will be there and then with men, will be a *tabernacle that ſhall not be taken down; not one of the ſtakes thereof ſhall ever be removed, neither ſhall any of the cords thereof be broken* (*f*); no removing, no rolling, no wheeling from place to place, no change of ſtate, condition, and circumſtance; when the ranſomed of the Lord are come to *Zion*, to the church above, *everlaſting joy* will be *upon their heads——and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away* (*g*): though this may likewiſe ſignify

(*f*) *Rev.* xxi. 3. *Iſ.* xxxiii. 20. (*g*) *Iſ.* xxxv. 10.

ſignify the firmneſs of Goſpel-churches; they are not in the air, nor on the ſea, where Wheels cannot be employed, but on *terra firma*; and what that is to Wheels, CHRIST is to his churches, the baſis and foundation of them; the LORD has founded *Zion*, and it is well founded; he has laid in it for a foundation a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner-ſtone, which is JESUS CHRIST, the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets; of their laying miniſterially; and on which Goſpel-churches in all ages are laid, a rock firm and ſure, againſt which the powers of hell and earth cannot prevail.——2. The Wheels are ſaid to be *by the Cherubim*, or living creatures; ſee ch. i. 15. and x. 9. 16. 19. to be put in motion by them. The churches are placed by the miniſters of the word, near them, and beſides them, to put them in mind of, and to ſtir them up to the exerciſe of every grace, faith, hope, love, *&c.* and to put them in mind of every duty both towards God and man, that they be ready to every good work, and careful to maintain them; and to put them in remembrance of the doctrines of the Goſpel they have made a profeſſion of, that they hold them faſt unto the end. They are placed by them to inſtruct them in matters of faith, to declare to them the whole counſel

ſel of GOD, and keep back nothing from them that may be profitable to them; and to go before them, and give the lead to them in matters of worſhip, and to direct them in matters of diſcipline; to obſerve to them the rules of it, that they withdraw from perſons that walk diſorderly; and an heretic after the firſt and ſecond admonition reject. They are placed by them to watch over them, to watch for their ſouls, for the good of them, and to preſerve them from every evil and falſe way, from immorality and hereſy, from every thing dangerous and pernicious. They are called watchmen, in alluſion both to watchmen that go about the city, to give the time of night, and notice of any danger; and to watchmen on the walls, ſet there to deſcry an enemy, and give the alarm of his near approach, to provide againſt him. They are placed by them, the churches by the miniſters, that they may feed them with knowledge and underſtanding, with the wholeſome words of CHRIST, with the words of faith and good doctrine, with the ſincere milk of the word, and with the bread of life. Wherefore, if any ſhould make the enquiry, where CHRIST feeds his flocks, let them take the anſwer and direction he gives; *go thy way forth by the footſteps of the flock, and*

and feed thy kids beſides the ſhepherd's tents (*b*); go where the Cherubim and Wheels be, where miniſters and churches meet together for religious exerciſes.

FOURTHLY, the form, figure, colour, and appearance of the Wheels, the deſcription of which is various.——1. They are ſaid to have four faces, as in the following verſe, ℣. 14. *and every one had four faces; the firſt face was the face of a cherub, and the ſecond face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle*; the ſame with the faces of the Cherubim. Miniſters and churches are, or ſhould be, of the ſame mind, of the ſame judgment, and of one accord; they ſhould have the ſame face and look, and draw the ſame way; and then they are like *a company of horſes in Pharaoh's chariot* (*i*); they'll put ſhoulder to ſhoulder, and ſerve the Lord with one conſent. The firſt face was that of a cherub, that is, of an ox, as appears from ch. i. 10. which has its name from plowing, in which the ox was employed, and gives the denomination to the whole figure: now this is a proper emblem of the members of Goſpel-churches, it being a clean creature that chews the cud; and ſo deſcribes

(*b*) *Cant.* i. 7, 8. (*i*) *Cant.* i. 9.

ſcribes ſuch who ruminate on the word, who meditate in the law and doctrine of GOD night and day, conſtantly, as they have leiſure and opportunity; and their meditation is ſweet when they are led to the nature, perfections, and promiſes of GOD, to his everlaſting love, and the covenant of grace, to the perſon, offices, and grace of CHRIST. The ox is patient under the yoke when accuſtomed to it; and ſo are ſaints who have learnt, and have been inured to bear the yoke in their youth; whether the yoke of CHRIST's commands, which is eaſy and light; or the yoke of affliction, reproaches, and perſecution, which they bear patiently for CHRIST's ſake; tribulation works patience in them, and patience has its perfect work. The ox is a laborious creature, ſtrong to labour, and conſtant in it; and ſo fitly repreſents the members of Goſpel-churches, who are or ſhould be ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD; as the members of the firſt Goſpel-church were, who continued ſtedfaſtly in the apoſtles doctrine, and in fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. The *ſecond* face was the face of a man; ſignifying that they were knowing and underſtanding perſons, were in underſtanding, men, and had attained to a large meaſure of knowledge of divine and ſpiritual things,

and

and were ſtill growing in grace, and in the knowledge of CHRIST; and that they were, or ſhould be, humane, kind to one another, tender-hearted, and put on bowels of compaſſion and tenderneſs to each other; and forgive one another any quarrel they had, as GOD for CHRIST's ſake forgave them; and that they were ſympathizing with each other in every condition and circumſtance; wept with thoſe that wept, and rejoiced with thoſe that rejoiced. The *third* face was the face of a lion; denoting courage, boldneſs, and intrepidity in the ſaints, who are and ſhould be as bold as a lion in the cauſe of CHRIST, and in the profeſſion of him, holding faſt his name, and not denying his faith, even where *Satan*'s ſeat is; not being afraid of the faces of men, as they have no reaſon; for if God is for them, and on their ſide; if he is their light and life, their ſalvation and ſtrength, they have nothing to fear from men or devils. The *fourth* face was that of an eagle, a bird that has a piercing eye, and ſoars aloft, and deſcribes ſuch who mount up with wings as eagles, in the exerciſe of faith and love; who dwell on high, in GOD and CHRIST, and upon everlaſting things; who ſeek after, and ſet their affections on things above, where JESUS is.——2. *The appearance of the Wheels was as the colour of a beryll ſtone,*

v. 9. ſo in ch. i. 16. which was one of the precious ſtones in the high prieſt's breaſt-plate, and one of the twelve foundations of the new *Jeruſalem*, and with which the hands of CHRIST are ſaid to be adorned. This may denote the precioufneſs of the members of Goſpel-churches, what worth and value they are of in the eſteem of CHRIST; theſe precious ſons of *Sion* are not only comparable to fine gold, for their luſtre, ſplendor, worth, and duration; but to jewels and precious ſtones: *they ſhall be mine*, ſays CHRIST (*k*), *when I make up my jewels:* and may ſignify the beauty and glory of the churches of CHRIST, and the members of them; whoſe *cheeks are comely with rows of jewels*, and their *neck with chains of gold* (*l*); as they are adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and arrayed with the robe of CHRIST's righteouſneſs, and the garments of his ſalvation; when they are as richly decked as the bridegroom, with his ornaments, and the bride with her jewels. The colour of the beryll is the colour of the ſea, or a ſea-green; and the word for it, *Tarſhiſh*, is uſed for the ſea itſelf; and may lead to think of the fluctuating ſtate of the churches of CHRIST in this world; which is as a tempeſtuous ſea, and they as ſhips upon it, *toſſed with*

 tempeſts,

(*k*) *Mal.* iii. 17. (*l*) *Cant.* i. 10.

tempeſts, and not comforted; CHRIST is their pilot, faith the cable, and hope the anchor, ſure and ſtedfaſt; and through the ſkill, ability, and guidance of the pilot, they are brought at laſt, through many ſtorms and tempeſts to the deſired haven.——3. The four Wheels had *one likeneſs*, ℣. 10. and ch. i. 16. Goſpel-churches conſiſt of one and the ſame ſort of perſons; who are enlightened by the SPIRIT of GOD to ſee their loſt ſtate by nature; are directed to CHRIST alone for ſalvation, and obtain like precious faith for nature, though not to the ſame degree; and whoſe experiences are ſimilar: for *as face anſwers to face in water* (*m*), ſo do the hearts and experiences of GOD's people anſwer to each other: for though the SPIRIT of GOD may take a different courſe with ſomethan with others; ſome have more of, and are held longer under, the terrors of the law; whilſt others are drawn with the cords of love, almoſt at once; they may have different promiſes applied, and different providences may be ſanctified to them; yet the ſum and ſubſtance, and tendency of their experience are the ſame, to debaſe the creature, exalt CHRIST, and magnify the riches of GOD's grace. Goſpel-churches have the ſame faith, the ſame doctrine of faith; for there is but one

(*m*) *Prov.* xxvii. 19.

one faith delivered to the ſaints; they have the ſame ordinances, baptiſm and the LORD's ſupper; and the ſame officers, biſhops, and deacons; they have the ſame power and authority to chuſe their own officers, as the firſt church did *Matthias* in the room of *Judas*, and deacons when they became neceſſary: they have the ſame power to receive and exclude members; they are independent of others, and call no man maſter on earth; they have the ſame form of government, under CHRIST their Head, Lord and Maſter, whom they own and profeſs to be their King, Lawgiver, and Saviour, and no other. They have paſtors over them under CHRIST, whom they not only honour and eſteem, but yield ſubjection to, when ruling well according to the laws and inſtitutions of CHRIST——4. They are ſaid to be a Wheel *in the middle of a Wheel*, *v.* 10. and ch. i. 16. not incluſively, as if one Wheel was included in the other; for then they would not be alike, but one would be leſſer than another; but they were put in that croſs and tranſverſe way before deſcribed, ſo that they ſeemed but one Wheel, one globe or ſphere; that is, one catholic church, built on the ſame foundation of the apoſtles and prophets; and which grows up into an holy temple in the LORD, and is built as one habitation for God,

Father, Son, and Spirit.——5. The rings, circles, and circumferences of theſe Wheels, deſerve ſome notice: *as for their rings,* it is ſaid, ch. i. 18. *they were ſo high that they were dreadful, and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.*——(1). Theſe were very high, and ſo muſt in proportion be very large; and which may ſignify the viſibility and extenſiveneſs of the churches of CHRIST under the Goſpel-diſpenſation, eſpecially in the latter day. The churches of CHRIST are like a city upon an high hill, which cannot be hid, but is ſeen at a great diſtance. They are built upon a rock, that is exceeding high; and in the latter day they will be exalted above the high mountains and hills, the kingdoms and ſtates of this world; and will be ſo enlarged when the nation of the *Jews,* and the fulneſs of the *Gentiles* are brought in, that there will be want of room for the members to dwell in them, *Iſ.* ii. 2. and xlix. 20.——(2). They are ſaid to be very dreadful, as the church militant is to her enemies, *terrible as an army with banners* (*n*); having CHRIST as a general at the head of it, with a large number of good ſoldiers of his under him, and accoutred with the whole armour of GOD, in rank and file, and colours flying; and as the church will be in her elevated ſtate, when

(*n*) *Cant.* vi. 4, 10.

when her ſlain witneſſes are riſen, and ſhall aſcend to heaven; that is, come into a glorious and happy ſtate in the ſight of their enemies, and ſeven thouſand men of name ſlain, and the remnant affrighted. Or the word may be here rendered *reverent* (*o*); they were both reverend and reverent; reſpectable, in high eſteem, as the church will be in the latter day, even to great perſonages. Kings will be nurſing fathers to her, and queens nurſing mothers; and they will bow down towards her, and lick the duſt of her feet, *Iſ.* xlix. 23. and reverent; or *there was fear*, or *they had fear in them* (*p*); the fear of GOD is in his churches; he is greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of the ſaints; and the true members thereof ſerve him with reverence and godly fear.——(3). Theſe rings were *full of eyes round about*; the ſame is ſaid of the Wheels, that is, of the rings of them, *v.* 12. This ſhews that the members of Goſpel-churches are ſuch who have the eyes of their underſtanding enlightened by the Spirit of God, to ſee the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, and the demerit of it; to behold the preciouſneſs, excellency, ſuitableneſs, and fulneſs of CHRIST, as a Saviour; to look to him for life and ſalvation, for righteouſneſs

(*o*) So Dr. *Lightfoot*'s Proſpect of the Temple, &c. p. 2055. (*p*) ויראה להם et timor illis erat, *Cocceius*; ſo *Starckius*.

teouſneſs and ſtrength, and every ſupply of grace; and that they have an inſight into, and knowledge of the truths of the Goſpel, which are unſeen and unknown to natural and carnal men; being led into them by the ſpirit of truth, and having that anointing which teacheth all things neceſſary to ſalvation: and they are full of eyes, to watch over themſelves and others; over themſelves, that they walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, as becomes the Goſpel of CHRIST they profeſs; and over others, *looking diligently*, επισκοπουντες, acting the part of a biſhop or overſeer, as every member of a church in this reſpect ſhould: *leſt any man fail of the grace of God*; come ſhort of it, drop or deny any doctrine of grace: *leſt any root of bitterneſs*; immorality or hereſy: *ſpringing up, trouble*; ſome of the members: *and thereby many be defiled* (*q*); with bad principles, or with bad practices.

FIFTHLY, the motion of the Wheels; which motion,—— 1. was not retrograde; *they went on their four ſides, they turned not as they went*, ℣. 11. neither to the right, nor left: or *they returned not when they went*, ch. i. 17. they did not go back, but went ſtraight on; true members of Goſpel-churches,

(*q*) *Heb.* xii. 15.

churches, are ſuch who *draw not back to perdition*, but go on believing; having *put* their *hand to the plough* (*r*), having made a profeſſion of CHRIST, and his Goſpel, they neither look back, nor draw back, or they would not be fit for the kingdom of heaven; they turn not to the right hand, nor the left; but walk on in CHRIST, and their profeſſion of him, as they have received him, and in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD, which he has appointed to be obſerved.——2. Their motion is the ſame with the Cherubim, or living creatures; as the one moved, ſo the other did; the Wheels *went by* the Cherubim, by the *ſides* of them, *v.* 16, 19. Miniſters are or ſhould be examples to the churches in purity of doctrine and converſation; and churches ſhould walk as they have them for an example, and be followers of them ſo far as they are followers of CHRIST; they are to go by their ſide, and keep pace with them in faith and practice; *when they* the cherubim *ſtood, theſe* the wheels *ſtood, when they were lifted up, theſe lift up themſelves alſo, v.* 17. ſee ch. i. 19, 21. Churches obſerve the motions of the miniſters, and act accordingly; they give the lead in worſhip, as before obſerved; when they lift up their hearts with their

(*r*) *Heb.* x. 39. *Luke* ix. 62.

their hands in prayer and praiſe, the members of churches follow, and join them; when they are in elevated frames of ſoul in their work, and are warm and lively in their miniſtrations, generally ſpeaking the churches are ſo likewiſe; but if they are dull and heavy, motionleſs and inactive, ſlothful in buſineſs, and not fervent in ſpirit, the members are ſo too; as miniſters are, for the moſt part the churches be.——
3. The Wheels followed the head, which guided and directed them: *to the place where the head looked, they followed it*, ℣. 11. the head or face on each ſemicircle, the ſame with thoſe of the Cherubim; and ſo may denote miniſters, paſtors, guides, and governors of the churches; whoſe faith they are to follow, conſidering the end of their converſation; or rather CHRIST, the head of the church, the lamb that is to be followed, whitherſoever he goes, and in whatſoever he directs; unleſs—— 4. the Spirit of God is meant, ſince it is ſaid in ch. i. 20. *whitherſoever the Spirit was to go they went*; truly gracious ſouls walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit; they are led by him into all truth, as it is in JESUS; and they walk in all the paths of faith and duty, as they are influenced and guided by him; they are directed by him in a right way, to the city of their habitation,

ion, to a land of uprightneſs; for —— 5. *the ſpirit of the living creatures was in them*, ℣. 17. that is, in the Wheels, ch. i. 20, 21. the ſpirit of life which is in CHRIST, and from CHRIST, is in his miniſters; and the ſame ſpirit that is in the miniſters, is in the churches; and he is in both a ſpirit of life, and a ſpirit of liberty, in the exerciſe of grace, and performance of duty; for there is but *one ſpirit* in all, though in a different meaſure; even as ſaints are by *one ſpirit baptized into one body* the church, and are *called in one hope* of their *calling* (*s*) to the ſame happineſs and glory.

Now theſe viſions of *Ezekiel*, in this and the *Firſt* chapter, as they give a glorious and beautiful repreſentation of the ſtate of miniſters and churches under the Goſpel-diſpenſation; they may be read with pleaſure, delight, and profit, when ſpiritually underſtood; yet they are cloſed with a melancholy ſcene of things; the Cherubim are repreſented as mounting up from the earth, and the Wheels beſides them; and the glory of the GOD of *Iſrael* above them all, ready to take their flight, and depart, ℣. 19. and ch. xi. 22, 23. which may ſignify the removal of Goſpel-miniſters from earth to heaven by death, and the breaking up of Goſpel-churches, and the departure of GOD from his profeſ-

(*i*) 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. *Epheſ.* iv. 4.

ſing people, of which we have already had ſome inſtances: and, without pretending to a ſpirit of prophecy, things will continue to go on in this way, worſe and worſe, till the kingdom of GOD will be taken from us, the candleſtick be removed out of its place, the glory of GOD depart, and an *Ichabod* be wrote on his intereſt; which will be completed when the witneſſes are ſlain; and then ſcarce a cherub will be ſeen, nor a Wheel in motion; the dead bodies of the witneſſes will lie unburied, none daring to ſhew a decent regard unto them. From what has been ſaid, we may learn,

1. The nature of Goſpel-churches, the matter of which they conſiſt, the form of them, the work that is done in them, and by them, and their ſtate, condition, and circumſtances, under the preſent diſpenſation. 2. The neceſſity there is of an harmony between miniſters and churches: it is highly requiſite they ſhould agree, and act in concert; the Wheels ſhould be by the Cherubim, and move as they do; they ſhould join and unite to promote the intereſt of religion, or things will never go on happily and comfortably. 3. This may inſtruct and direct us to pray for the Spirit of God to be poured down upon both miniſters and churches; that miniſters may have a larger meaſure of it, and that the ſpirit of the living creatures might be in

the Wheels; the ſame, or a like meaſure of the ſpirit that is in miniſters, might be in the churches; and for this we ſhould pray importunately and inceſſantly; for we ſhall never have happy times, or halcyon days, *until the Spirit be poured down upon us from on high, and the wilderneſs be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a foreſt; then judgment ſhall dwell in the wilderneſs, and righteouſneſs remain in the fruitful field; and the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace,* and the effect of *righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever; and my people ſhall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in ſure dwellings, and in quiet reſting places* (*t*).

(*t*) *Iſ.* xxxii. 15, 16, 17, 18.

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